Northeast Introduction

Feast Ladle

Basket

Bandolier Bag

Morrison Collage

We honor the earth, for it is our Grandmother, and its gifts are of our Grandmother. We know our Grandmother changes her spirits from cold to warm, from warm to hot, from hot to warm, from warm to cold. This is her cycle, but with each change she gives us the gifts that are appropriate and necessary.

- Ignatia Broker, Ojibwe

The art of the Woodlands people is closely related to the natural environment. The territories of the Woodlands people have extended from the Atlantic seaboard to the Mississippi River. Although the terrain varies from seacoast to mountains, valleys, and inland waters, one element was common to all - the forests. Everything the people needed to survive came from the trees, the plants, and the animals of the forest.

Woodlands people can be divided into two major language groups, Iroquoian and Algonquian. Each language group is composed of people that share certain cultural characteristics, even though they varied in lifestyle. Historically, the Iroquois were known as the "People of the Longhouse" because of the rectangular, barrel-roofed communal houses in which they lived. Conical or domed wigwams were common to the Algonquian group. Woodlands people maintained a complex political system and trade network. The confederation of the Iroquois, which was made up of six nations, served as one model for European colonists when they formed the United States government.

European Contact

The Woodlands people along the eastern seaboard were among the first Native Americans to feel the impact of European immigration. In the beginning, traders' demand for furs created an economic opportunity for the American Indians. At the same time, increasing numbers of white settlers eventually forced the Woodlands people west or north into Canada in order to survive.

The Ojibwe People

Among the Woodlands people to be affected were the Ojibwe, who moved into the Great Lakes region from the east in the 18th century. Today, the Ojibwe, or Chippewa, are among the largest of American Indian nations. They live in parts of Canada, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and Minnesota.

There are seven Ojibwe reservations in Minnesota. In their own language, the Ojibwe refer to themselves as Anishinabe, which means "original people."

The Cycle of Life
In the past, the seasons of the year guided the lives and occupations of all Ojibwe people. In winter, small communities based on family groups lived in the forests, where they constructed wigwams of bent saplings and birchbark. Men hunted game. Women tanned hides and made and decorated objects for everyday use. With the first snowfall, the people gathered by the fire in the evenings to tell stories, teaching their children history and tradition.

In spring, the people gathered in the maple groves to collect sap to make sugar. During the summer, villages were set up on lakeshores. Here, the men fished, and women planted crops like corn, squash, and pumpkins, and gathered wild berries. By late August, it was time to harvest the wild rice that grew in the shallow lake waters. When harvest was complete, the Ojibwe trapped and fished to stock up for winter. The cycle began again as they moved back to the forests for the winter months.

Identity
In the words of the people of the Red Lake Reservation in Minnesota, *"To be an Ojibwe is to sense the movement of nature, to learn from the winds, the waters, and the richness of the earth. Our land was always our teacher and always will be. That is why we cherish it and seek to save it for our children and grandchildren and all generations to come."*

Tribal Web Site
Iroquois web site: http://www.sixnations.org/

Feast Ladle

Seneca
Woodlands region (United States)
Feast ladle, 19th century
Wood
The Christina N. and Swan J. Turnblad Memorial Fund 89.89.2

KEY IDEAS
- Woodlands people held feasts to offer thanksgiving.
- Birds have spiritual importance to Woodlands people.

Introduction
Feasts were very important ceremonies among the Woodlands people. Their purpose was to give thanks for everything they took from nature in order to survive and thrive. When sap was gathered from maple trees or wild rice harvested from lakes, the people held feasts of thanksgiving. Each person attending a feast brought his or her own ladle. The men carved these ladles from wood.

Symbolism
This ladle is in the form of a bird. The spoon is the bird's body, while the handle is the head and neck. The only surface markings are the dots that represent the bird's eyes and the line that indicates the opening of the bird's beak.

Woodlands people believed birds were spiritual creatures because they could soar to heights that humans could not reach. Ladles carved in the form of a bird were often used for religious purposes.

Another view of the Feast Ladle

Other Ladles

Lodzi Wood Spoon
This wooden spoon, made around the same time as the Woodlands ladle, was carved by people in central Africa.

Wood Spoon
North East Zambia
Lodzi
98.9.3

Plains Horn Spoon
This spoon, made of animal horn by Native American Plains people, was carved about the same time as the Woodlands ladle.

Horn Spoon
North American Plains
92.10

Chippewa Wood Feast Spoon with Bird Effigy
Here is a similar ladle, also made by a Woodlands tribe, in the Institute's collection.

Wood Feast Spoon with Bird Effigy
North American Chippewa 89.89.1

English Silver Spoon
This silver spoon was made by an artist from England at the beginning of the twentieth-century.

Oliver Baker
English
Silver Spoon, 1903
L99.184.11

Mesquakie Ladle
This Ladle was carved very recently, in 1986, by Arthur Black Cloud, a member of the Mesquakie tribe of Iowa.

Arthur Black Cloud Ladle
North American
Mesquakie
91.146

Basket

Algonquin
Woodlands region (United States)
Basket, early 20th century
Scraped Birch Bark
The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund 90.52.2

KEY IDEAS

• Ancient Woodlands people created everything they needed from the natural resources around them.
• The bark of a birch tree is an extremely versatile material.

Introduction

The bark of a birch tree is an extremely versatile material. It can be folded, sewn, and made into everything from canoes to containers. The birchbark was cut from the tree in the spring after which it would grow back. Because birchbark is composed of different colored layers, a two-tone design could be made by drawing the design on the bark and then scraping away the top layer. Then the container was cut from the bark, folded into shape, and sewn together with spruce root.

Design

This symmetrical, "mirror image," design was probably derived from European patterns. However the artist's use of two rabbits suggests the attraction animals held for the Woodlands people. The rabbit, called wa-bo-os by the Ojibwe, was considered a brother. Traditionally, only women made birchbark containers. Today, both Woodlands men and women make them.

Bandolier Bag

Anishinabe (Ojibwe)
Woodlands region (United States)
Bandolier Bag, early 20th century
Beadwork on muslin and black velvet, wool yarn
Bequest of Dorothy Record Bauman 74.63.8

KEY IDEAS

• Ojibwe women are famous for their floral beadwork designs.
• Influenced by European pouches, Ojibwe bandolier bags became decorative accessories that were worn by men.

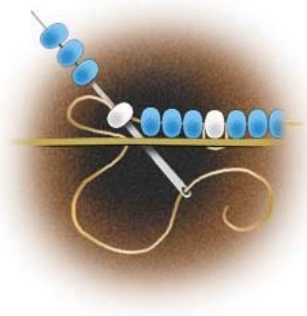
Introduction

This shoulder-strap pouch is called a bandolier bag. It was fashioned after a type of pouch carried by British soldiers. Woodland Indian men wore bandolier bags as objects of prestige. Sometimes they wore more than one at a time. This kind of bag was so valuable that the Woodlands people could trade one bag to the neighboring Dakota people for a pony.

Long before Europeans came to North America Ojibwe women designed necklaces using beads made from wood, shells or other materials. The Ojibwe word for beads - *manidoominensag* - means "berries of the Creator." On clothing, women made designs by sewing on dyed porcupine quills. European glass beads, introduced in the 17th century, gradually replaced quillwork on bags like this one.

Design

This part of the bag, featuring a geometric floral design, was made on a loom; then it was sewn onto the bag. A loom consisted of long threads that were stretched across a rectangular wooden frame. Beads were strung on another thread that was woven over and under the longer threads to form this design.



Technique

The curving floral design on the straps was made by stitching the beads directly onto the cloth. It is believed that French nuns in Quebec taught this technique to the Ojibwe artists. The style of the flowers was probably influenced by folk art that European settlers brought with them to the New World.

Lakota, Great Plains Region (United States)
Pipe bag, about 1885
Leather, glass beads, porcupine quills and feathers, Bequest of Dorothy Record Bauman 74.63.15

Compare It

The curving floral designs on the shoulder strap of this Bandolier Bag are quite different from the geometric designs on the pipe bag made by a Lakota artist of the Great Plains region. Although the shape of the two bags is similar, Woodlands people were inspired by the organic shapes of the plants, vines and flowers they observed all around them. The designs used by the Lakota people are geometric; that is straight-edged, repeated shapes that may be symbolic of, but do not mimic, nature.

Morrison Collage

George Morrison, Anishinabe (Ojibwe) 1919-2000
Woodlands region (United States)
Collage IX: Landscape, 1974
Wood
The Frances E. Andrews Fund 75.24

KEY IDEAS

• This collage was made to be displayed on a wall in a large space like a museum.
• The abstract patterns created by the assembled wood pieces are based on the natural

Introduction

This large wood collage was made by George Morrison, an artist who was born on the Grand Portage Indian Reservation in Minnesota. Morrison studied art in New York and in Europe, and lived for many years in the New York area.

Morrison glued pieces of wood to a surface to create this abstract composition. Some of the pieces of wood were found in nature. Although we might not recognize it at first glance, the subject is a landscape. See if you can find some elements of nature: sky, land, water, rocks, horizon. Unlike other works of art in Surrounded by Beauty, this collage was made to be displayed on a wall rather than used for a specific, ordinary purpose.

In this search for my own reality, I seek the power of the rock, the magic of the water, the religion of the tree, the color of the wind, and the enigma of the horizon.
- George Morrison

Details

On this detail, we can see the variations in texture, color, size, and shape of the wood pieces that Morrison used to make this section of the collage. Some of the pieces look as if they were found in nature, while others may have been cut to fit a particluar space.

Listen

* His training and early influences
* Natural textures in his work
* What wood grain evokes
* The role of landscape in his work

Access these audio clips on the online version of Surrounded by Beauty: http://www.artsmia.org/surrounded-by-beauty

Audio Transcripts

George Morrison talks about:

His training and early influences:

"My training was very academic, and we drew from models and even casts. I don't regret that I had that kind of training, it was good for me, but I was also influenced by movements that were coming from Europe around the time of my leaving school and reaching ("actions league"?) in New York. My work was beginning to be accepted as a person who was an Indian, but not doing Indian themes. A lot of my techniques probably remain within that context of abstraction, surrealism and expressionism."

Natural textures in his work:
"Since my student days, I have always been interested in texture. I suppose that comes from growing up around and being close to nature, living around rocks and trees, water, and being influenced by that kind of natural texture."

What wood grain evokes:
"The grain in the wood and the knots in the wood suggest clouds and sun, the movements of clouds in the sky. Could suggest water, but it could also suggest the beach and sand, the crusty sand and the crusty earth or the crusty rocks, or even some of the moss and some of the lichen that's attached to the rocks. Some of that kind of feeling."

The role of landscape in his work:
"The landscape has been primarily one of my main themes in my paintings throughout my life, so therefore I think the horizon line came back full force, consciously and subconsciously."

Compare It

George Morrison created his wood collage in the style of abstract art he studied and practiced, first in art school in Minneapolis, and then as an artist in New York. While wood is certainly a material many artists - including American Indian artists - are familiar with, Morrison uses this material in a way that is different from traditional American Indian arts. Todd Yellow Cloud Augusta has beaded this baby bonnet with traditional Plains images. But as beadwork itself is traditionally women's work, Augusta has broken one tradition by keeping another. Both artists lived and worked within, and outside of, American Indian traditions.

Todd Yellow Cloud Augusta,
Great Plains region (United States),
Oglala Lakota
Baby Bonnet, 1991
Cotton, glass beads
The Christina N. and Swan
J.Turnblad Memorial Fund, 91.93